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The WOOD DUCK

HAMILTON NATURALISTS' CLUB
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The Hamilton Naturalists' Club promotes public interest in the study, conservation and appreciation of our natural heritage. Meetings are held monthly from September to May inclusive, and visitors are always welcome. Outdoor field events are scheduled for every month, and a complete listing for the entire season may be obtained from the Membership Director.

HAMILTON NATURALISTS' CLUB 1986-87 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Field Events	Mr. Albert Butwick Box 40, Millgrove Ontario L0R 1V0	689-6672

NOTICE OF FEBRUARY MEETING

Time: MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1987 - 8 p.m.

Place: Royal Botanical Gardens Headquarters
680 Plains Road West, Burlington

Topic: The Survival Game: Mr. Doug Sadler, veteran nature columnist of the Peterborough Examiner.

NOTICE OF MARCH MEETING

Time: MONDAY, MARCH 9, 1987 - 8 p.m.

Place: Royal Botanical Gardens Headquarters
680 Plains Road West, Burlington

Topic: Environmental Impact of Hydro Transmission: Ms. Sheelagh Laurance, Public Relations Department, Ontario Hydro.

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F I E L D E V E N T S

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15: 8:00 a.m. WINTER BIRDING

A half-day outing in the Dundas Marsh to observe wintering species. Meet at the Royal Botanical Gardens Nature Centre, Arboretum.

Leader: Bruce Duncan: 765-3322

MARCH 1 - MAY 31: BEAMER HAWK WATCH

There is usually someone on hand to help with hawk identification at Beamer Memorial Conservation Area on the Escarpment at Grimsby. The best times are the last week in March and the last two in April.

NEWS FROM THE OWL REHABILITATION RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Kay McKeever

This has been another up and down year at the Owl Foundation; at least not as far down - or up - as last year! It has been a quiet year for admissions, few calamities for the owls, some disappointments and several happy surprises.

Our chief disappointments were with the species which had already bred in past years, and we suppose this was largely due to the cold, late spring of '86. Our Great Grey pair were a month later in egg-lay than last year, and although we had no apparent trauma at the nest this year, we had no babies either.

"Big Woo" laid her usual 4 eggs and incubated them with apparent zeal, but as hatch time drew near it was evident from an examination of the eggs that if they HAD been fertile, the embryos had succumbed early in development. One can speculate about the reasons, but since all three of last year's eggs were fertile and the embryos reached maturity, we wonder if the male's ("James") vigour was diminished by the lateness of the season. (Being a woman, I always feel the males are suspect!)

We had several weeks of real anticipation with our Snowy female "Lulu", and "Potchka" (a mate new to her, but long the successful mate of our lady "Ninotchka", who died last year). "Lula" sat belligerently on 6 eggs to full term, while our Potchka hovered round his new bride with protective fervor and tasty mice. Imagine our consternation on the 38th day of her lumpy vigil when she just got off her eggs and said phooey on motherhood for this year! Not to mention "Potchka's" consternation. After all his former success with women, he was in mortal sulks! Our astonishment was complete when we collected the eggs and found they were all infertile. What a foxy lady! We couldn't believe any creature would willingly sit on 6 eggs for 5 weeks without a firm conviction it was all going to be worthwhile! ("Lulu" has been with us in dignified spinsterhood for four years, but was in another facility -efore that, after losing three toes in a leg-hold trap.)

Another disappointment was with our little mother Saw-Whet, "Delilah". who lost her mate of many years last summer. Since this species is known to form seasonal bonds only, we had no hesitation in presenting her with a sprv young male in April ("Samson"Mk II) but although he did his damndest to be all she had ever wanted, the relationship just lacked the "magic" of the earlier romance and she simply sat quietly apart. Perhaps, after more than 10 years, she is ready to retire!

Although we have 7 tiny Pygmy Owls fooling around in their airy compounds, they are either all the same sex or they are too fond of the good life to settle down to the sobering business of raising families, for we have no new pair materializing out of the indolent mob. We mourn for our little pair of last year, taken by the weasel

More on the up-beat side, some of our regular breeders really outdid themselves this year. All three pairs of Eastern Screech Owls produced young. Of special interest is one pair in which the

male is red & the female grey. Last year their offspring were red, whereas this year they were grey! From this we conclude that the male is only red/grey (genetically) as opposed to red/red, so that the progeny could be either pigment. In another pair with a red male & grey female the male must be red/red because the progeny are unfailingly red, year after year.

Even our Western Screech Owls (MacFarlane) had eggs for the first time this year, although they were infertile. (We think that "Iffy", the male, only realized what was going on after "Hoolio" had laid the lot! Even to us her behaviour seemed unnecessarily bitchy while he was doing his best to chat her up, but apparently she finally concluded there was something essential about a male after all, and she began to beckon him from the box. However, by this time even we could hear the eggs rolling around in there, and after two more weeks of this nonsense she began to sit outside and take the air. By this time, poor "Iffy" was so confused he just stayed in the box, doubtless reflecting on the injustice of it all! Hopefully, they'll get their act together for next year.

Our three regular pairs of Burrowing Owls produced offspring this year, but again, the lateness of spring forced late clutches and we were only able to prepare 6 of the babes for release in the Kamloops area of B.C. in August. The other 6 were too young to train this year and will have to be over-wintered here, for spring release.

To our amazement, a 4th pair of these "ground owls" materialized this summer when we introduced "Bobbin", a California female to a little one-eyed male and despite her assessment as a human imprint of several years' standing, darned if they didn't defy the odds and produce 4 babes!

One of the really surprising events this year was a non-event! We had but one nestling Great Horned Owl admitted to ORRF - usually there are 6 to 18 turned in. Its age was out of sync. with those of our breeding pair, so we presented it to foster mother "Granny" for a little brooding and tlc. and then passed it down the line to "Pops" as it began visual focus. Later, it was trained and released whence it came.

Our Barn Owls, "Buster" & "Bertha" produced only two babes again this year. "Buster" has a known (captive) history of 27 years the last 16 with us. For many years it has been necessary to physically separate this pair in order to prevent the production of more than two broods each year! Perhaps Buster, too, is dreaming of Florida and retirement!

Most exciting this year was the successful breeding of a second pair of Boreal Owls. When only one pair of damaged, wild owls of another species begins tobreed, we wonder if it is a rare fluke, but when it happens again, we feel perhaps we are on the right track. The new mother, a wing cripple of 8 years, from Sudbury, who had sat stoically with a neat little male from Akron, Ohio, without so much as a flicker of her eyelashes, did a double take at the new male we put her with this spring and was transformed into a gibbering idiot. She flapped around, she vocalized incessantly, she bathed and preened, she waited demurely to be fed and FINALLY, thank Heaven

she started investigating the 4 available nest sites! We don't know the state of the male's nerves by this time, but ours were shot! Despite our fears that her dithering would prolong the season past the male's endurance, she ultimately quit fooling around and laid two eggs. Fertile eggs! So now we have two lovely little smoke-grey-brown owlets in one of our over wintering training cages.

Then, to our absolute delight, our only male Hawk Owl, "Nick", from the Yukon, courted his friend of 3 years, "Norah", who climbed up to a nest platform (she can't fly) and laid 3 eggs. She sat on them full term (Thank Heaven I am not an owl) while he waited on her most solicitously, but alas, they were not fertile. During courting, we were worried that the combination of her crippled wing, his enthusiasm, and the fragility of the chosen branch was doomed to failure when we saw her knocked tothe ground so many times (!) but we dared not enter their territory at such a delicate time! Now, after the fact, both territories are resplendent with highways of astroturf and/or coarse bark, so she ought to be able to hang on, next spring, even through an earthquake!

In addition, for the first time ever, one of our tiny Flammulated Screech Owls nipped into a nest box and laid two perfect little eggs - totally without benefit of courtship or even, apparently, a male! Since the species is too delicate and too infrequently encountered for us to risk any of them with the anaesthesia required for laparoscopy, we remain in doubt as to the sexes of the other 4. We are pretty sure this one, at least, is female!

And finally, after four months of pleading, threatening, begging and cajoling, and thanks to the help of several of our American friends, we joyously welcomed to our project a beautiful Spotted Owl from northern California. He was hit by a car and sustained a broken jaw. Although his mandibles will never be well enough aligned to kill live prey, we can feed him chunks of mice which he can swallow whole. He lives outside in a vast new compound, high up into old oak trees, with a half-mile vista out over the estuary. Now all he needs is a mate, so we can make use of his interrupted life and get his genes back into the mainstream of his species' population. Spotted Owls, sadly, are Canada's latest endangered avian species.

Among our few calamities this year was the loss of our other male Hawk Owl, who was shot inthe neck with a pellet gun, at Christmas-time. A nice, shiny, new present, I suppose. "Take your nice gun and find something to shoot with it.." It is hard to fathom the kind of human so ignorant and so callous as to shoot a crippled, protected species, in a cage, on private property, but this is the 6th in 10 years. We, and the police, and the responsible sportsmen we know, can only wonder at what sort of parent allows his son these weapons without any responsibility for their use. The professional hunting associations in our area support our program very generously and are as appalled as we are at such abuse of both hunting codes and common decency.

As we go into the fall of '86 we thought our supporters would be interested in some owl statistics! We have 86 permanent residents and a transient population of 28, made up of releasable owls overwintering for spring training, and some that are awaiting transfer to other facilities as permanent residents there. Our highest number or

hand at any one time this year was 142, back in July, with so many young owls in training.

In order of diminishing bulk, our 86 residents consist of: 5 Snowies; 6 Great Horned; 7 Great Grey; 6 Barred; 1 Spotted; 1 Spectacled Owl; 2 Barn Owls; 5 Short-Eared; 4 Hawk Owls; 2 Long-Eared; 11 Screech; 9 Burrowing; 5 Boreal; 10 Saw-Whet; 5 Flammulated Screech and 7 Pygmy Owls.

And just in case there are any lingering doubts as to our sanity, we also seem to be living with 4 cats (once feral, now pets) and 1 angora rabbit! Incredible, isn't it?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Kay McKeever sends the above report from the O.R.R.F. an organization close to the hearts of Hamilton Naturalists' Club members and one we have supported financially in recent years. Don't forget the O.R.R.F. is a fine organization to send a donation to - they always are in need of money to support their owl breeding and rehabilitation programs. Their address is:

Owl Rehabilitation Research Foundation
R. R. 1, Vineland Station
Ontario, L0R 2E0

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CONSERVATION NEWS

by Rob Dobos

Involvement by our Conservation Committee in the Hamilton Harbour RAP development has been continuing with a discussion of our policy statement and recommendations at the January Stakeholders' meeting.Early response to our recommendations by several stakeholders has been positive. Citizen input to the process is very important, and all Club members are encouraged to attend the next public meeting on Tuesday, February 24, 1987.

A reminder that all Hamilton residents are now able to recycle food and beverage cans,glass jars and bottles, and newspapers. Third Sector Recycling will pick up these materials from the curbside on your regular garbage collection day. Cans, glass and newspapers should be placed in bags clearly apart from your garbage before 7:00 a.m. It would also be helpful if cans, bottles and jars are rinsed first and labels, lids and caps are removed if possible. For more information about the program, call Third Sector Recycling at 528-9287.

The Club's letter writing campaign has been very active with letters being sent to government officials on several important issues on behalf of the Club. Letters were sent regarding logging in Backus Woods, the establishment of Bruce Peninsula National Park and multi-use conflicts in Provincial Parks. Responses have been received regarding the latter two letters and may be seen at the Conservation table.

Conservation News

Wildlife '87 was officially kicked off with Christmas Bird Counts involving the Honourable Tom McMillan in Prince Edward Island and Robert Bateman in Vancouver Island. Our Club is being urged to get involved in Wildlife '87 by participating in new conservation projects. Members are urged to come up with ideas for this.

A reminder that the 1986 Environmentalist of the Year Dinner in honour of Dr. Ross Hume Hall, a McMaster University biochemist, will be held on Friday, April 3,1987, at the Royal Connaught Hotel. Tickets are $16.00 each and available from John Struger (547-5116).

Another reminder that Conservation Lottery Tickets are being sold at the conservation table for $1.00 each. Members are urged to help sell tickets for your Club. We receive 30% of the sales proceeds which will be used for important conservation work by the Club. Please do your bit to help out.

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BOOK REVIEW

by Greg Laughton

Being interested in nature, hiking and the like, has its charms; you get a lot of outdoors time, without the exasperations of golf; you get to see a lot of beauty; and you learn things, to name just three. But there are drawbacks, especially if you try to follow your interest and take your young family with you; the kids like to wander and play, and that's what they're there for. And, at least in my family, my wife is, for good reasons, the official photographer....of kids,fungi, flowers, and other items of interest. SO:

Guess who that leaves, to carry the pack-and-contents? RIGHT! To begin with, the pack doesn't fit right---but we're doing something about that. Then there's the contents: Two pairs of binoculars; drink-boxes (and sometimes munchies) for four; extra jackets in season; camera lenses; specimen jars for bugs and other less-mentionable things; and there we come to it!) every Field Guide in the Known Universe. (Or, at least, as many of them as we have been able to afford so far).

I can't do much about anything but the books, but I have found an answer to that one: a Penguin book by Miles Kington, entitled Nature Made Ridiculously Simple, or How to Identify Absolutely Everything. It's published by Penguin, so it must be okay, right? And it only costs $4.95 Canadian. And, best of all, it has **128** pages! That's right, 128. I have been able to trade 32 pounds of miscellaneous field guides, for one.

I'm told I can quote excerpts from a book for review purposes, so here are some:

Nature Made Ridiculously Simple is based on the following principles, which are revolutionary only because they depend on common sense, not science.

Book Review

People like to identify things.
It is possible to identify anything.
Identification is made easier, not by offering more choice of models, but less choice.

No part of nature should ever be divided into more than ten species, and, the first few steps from the step-by-step guide:

1. Is it alive or dead? If live, see 2. If dead, see 18. If it seems to be shamming, give it a prod.

LIVE:

2. If it is alive, it is either stuck in the same place all its life (a plant---see 3) or can move about freely (not a plant -- see8).

6. Live things stuck in the ground, six to fifteen feet. See section four - bushes. Some flowers, by the way, manage to grow over six feet, but can easily be trimmed back to avoid confusion with bushes. Et Cetera. You see what I mean. This is a book meant for the practical naturalists.

You should buy it, preferably NOW.

(Reprinted from Peninsula Field Naturalists' Fall/86 Newsletter)

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DR. ROSS HUME HALL SELECTED AS 1986 ENVIRONMENTALIST OF THE YEAR FOR THE REGION OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH

Dr. Ross Hume Hall, in every sense of the word is an outstanding environmentalist. He started his career as a cancer researcher and began to question the philosophy of traditional treatment of this disease. He has been a professor in the Department of Biochemistry at McMaster University since 1967 where his research interests include the study of biological mechanisms of growth and development, assessment of effects of biological technologies in food, medicine and agriculture on the quality of life and the study of alternative technologies and science policies.

He has authored two books and over 50 articles as well as over 110 scientific papers since 1969.

Dr. Hall has linked his background in biochemistry to human health issues in a broad way and branched into nutrition science and organic based agriculture. In just ten years, he has channelled his energies into the solution of environmental problems that we all can relate to: pollution, modern agricultural methods, etc. He also conceived the novel concept of an ecological community that is becoming reality in the Kitchener-Waterloo region.

Making this world a cleaner, better place is Dr. Hall's passion. He has regularly been available for advice to local citizens and politicians. His work against pesticide abuse, for control of toxic chemicals, and on water quality has helped many in the Hamilton-Wentworth area who are trying to get action on environmental problems. His demonstrations of the effects of very low levels of

chemicals have brought home to politicians and the public that very real concern has to be given to environmental and health impacts even when toxic substances are present in small quantities.

For several years he was a member of the Advisory Board to the Federal Minister of the Environment and has recently been appointed chairman of Pollution Probe.

His involvement in all of these activities has been of great importance to the environmental movement and has resulted in an improved quality of life not only for citizens of Hamilton-Wentworth but of Ontario, Canada and the world at large.

The Environmentalist of the Year Committee consists of several active environmental and social organizations in the Hamilton-Wentworth Region. A Selection Committee reviewed the nominations and a Committee of Judges determined the recipient.

The Committee will honor Dr. Ross Hall at the Environmentalist of the Year Dinner to be held on April 3, 1987 at the Royal Connaught Hotel.

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THIS NATIVE PLANT
STAGHORN SUMAC (Rhus typhina)

by Barb McKean

In the snowy white of winter we find that bits of colour immediately grab our attention. Driving along any road in southern Ontario, you may find your eye drawn to a furry cone of scarlet fruit atop a thickly branched shrub. Staghorn Sumac is recognized by most but not 'known' to many!

A familiar sight in both urban and rural areas, sumac is a tenacious plant. It thrives in dry sandy soils along disturbed areas and embankments, where few other native species care to grow. Its tenacity arises in part from an exceptional ability to produce new stems from root suckers: once it gains a hold in an area, it is very difficult to eradicate. In the spring of 1983 a large stand of Staghorn Sumac was cut to ground level along the west side of the RBG nursery. By autumn, stems were recorded over 2.5 m in height, with a diameter of 3 cm. 'Rapid early growth' may be a bit of an understatement!

Staghorn Sumac typically reaches heights of 6 m. The alternate compound leaves are quite long, bearing 11 to 29 leaflets. Their brilliant scarlet colour is one of autumn's first signs.

The yellow-green flowers of this species are fairly non-descript, blooming through July. It is generally monoecious and the sexes are easily distinguished as the red fruits of the female colonies persist through much of the winter.

The importance of sumac as a wildlife food plant is unequalled by many species in our area. Its fat-rich inner bark is an important food item in the winter menu of rabbits and small rodents. The orang

This Native Plant - Staghorn Sumac

to yellow (or even iridescent green) inner wood is often laid bare by tiny teeth in search of a winter meal. The fruits provide a late winter snack for birds, who may also find extra protein in the many insect eggs and larvae that overwinter in the fruit clusters. The berries can also be a taste treat for children of all ages. Try wetting your finger, touching the surface of the fruit, and then tasting your fingertip. The hairs covering the fruits are rich in malic acid, creating a tart sensation. A very palatable sort of lemonade (sumacade) can be made by steeping the berries in water, then adding honey to taste. Don't forget the insects that live in the clusters: use a cheesecloth filter, and pick the berries as soon as they ripen (they can be frozen for later use).

The early medicinal uses of Staghorn Sumac were myriad and every part of the plant has been used at some point in the past. The dried reddened leaves were mixed with tobacco; the roots, bark, and berries have been used to cure everything from dysentry to gangrene (even the common cold!) The juice of the berries and flowers has been used for dyeing, and the bark used in tanning (the plant contains a high concentration of tannic acid). Ink has also been made from the milky exudate of the stems and leaves.

One needn't search far from home to find this intriguing though common plant. During winter, examine the withered tips of the branches. Staghorn Sumac lacks a true terminal bud. Autumn growth dies back to the first lateral bud: this is referred to as the false or pseudo terminal bud. New spring growth will begin at this point. It is also easy to find many close relatives of this plant in and around your home. Other members of Anacardiaceae include mangos, cashews, and our perennial favourite, Poison Ivy(Rhus toxicodendron).

Staghorn Sumac is abundant in open areas throughout the Gardens, including of course, Staghorn Hollow in Hendrie Valley. The cultivar cut leaved Staghorn Sumac (R. typhina f.dissecta Rehder), can be found adjacent to the administration wing of RBG Centre.

(reprinted from Pappus, Volume 4, No. 3)

TYPEWRITER FOR SALE

The H.N.C. has an IBM electric typewriter with an 18" carriage that we no longer need. If you are interested in purchasing it, contact Bruce Duncan 765-3322(evenings). Best offer accepted.

EASTERN BLUEBIRD NEST BOX SCHEME 1986 REPORT

LOCATION — WINONA, ONTARIO

AREA
- Northern Boundary - CNR tracks (also 50 Point Park)
- Eastern " - Wentworth County Line
- Western " - Glover's Road
- Southern " - Green Mountain Road (on top of Niagara Escarpment)

HABITAT — Vineyards, fruit orchards and open fields

102 nest boxes were put on fence posts approximately 5 feet from ground level

RESULTS

Number of nests	-	25
Number of eggs	-	118
Number of eggs destroyed	-	15
Number of young bluebirds	-	47

COMMENTS

1. The number of young bluebirds (47) shows a decrease of 70% over the 1985 season. This was due to several days of cold wet weather around May 23rd which caused 32 young bluebirds to die.
2. The banding program was carried out by D. Agro and R. Stamp.

   Adult bluebirds banded - 3

   Young bluebirds banded - 32
3. Other boxes contained - tree swallows 43 nests, 165 young
   - House Wren 4 nests, 24 young
   - House Sparrows 12 nests, young unknown

Additional information may be obtained by contacting:

George Coker — 1326 - #8 Highway, Winona, Ontario (416) 643-2033

Ray Hughes — 10 Millikin Drive, Winona Ontario (416) 643-1937

Sam Tabone — 234 Glenholme, Winona, Ontario (416) 643-2375

ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW NATIONAL PARK

The province of Ontario will donate land and other capital improvements, valued at $8.5 million, to the federal government to establish the Bruce Peninsula National Park.

This park was first discussed by the provincial and federal governments in 1981. The Bruce peninsula is a ridge of land separating Lake Huron and Georgian Bay at the northern extension of the Niagara Escarpment.

Ontario Natural Resources Minister Vincent Kerrio announced recently that agreement in principle had been reached with federal Minister of the Environment, Tom McMillan,on the transfer of land to the federal government for the 270-square kilometre park at the tip of the peninsula.

The national park would include about 12,950 hectares of land. In that relatively small space, the park would unite Cyprus Lake and Little Cove provincial parks, Crown land, the Bruce Trail and a nature reserve. As well, it would include 18 islands in the Georgian Bay Islands National Park and Fathom Five Provincial Park -- Canada's only underwater park.

According to Mr. Kerrio, Ontario will donate 7,000 hectares of land, including the two provincial parks valued at $6 million and their capital improvements, to the Bruce Peninsula National Park. These lands, valued at 2.5 million, will form almost half of the new park.

"I have also agreed that there should be no hunting within the national park," Mr. Kerrio said.

"However, I have identified an area of approximately 3,800 hectares in the southwest corner of the study area which will not be included in the park. By doing this, a portion of the area can be retained for the hunting activities which are so much a part of the area's tradition."

A draft agreement for the land transfer, including exact boundaries of the park, is being prepared to be signed by the federal and provincial ministers. They will meet soon to finalize this agreement, which could be signed by both ministers by December 31,/86.

The park will be Ontario's fifth, and Canada's 33rd national park.

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THE TUPELO

by W. Sherwood Fox

In making this rare native tree known to Canadians one faces a difficulty in a bewildering confusion of names. The several common names of this tree furnish an excellent example of how close such names of plants and living creatures can come to being meaningless and hence misleading. Tupelo, the name prevailing in the Deep South, has been foisted by some inventive mind upon a very dubious Greek original. Pepperidge, best known in the middle South and once an ancient English name of the Barberry, is now, without warrant, tagged on to an entirely unrelated American plant. One may at once rule out Gum, since the tree is utterly devoid of gum. Black is equally unsuitable, as the dark bark of the species is no blacker than the bark of many other of our trees. Least questionable of all the names is Sour, because the tree's little fruits have a distinctly acid though pleasant taste. This collection of names is truly a muddle; but in order that we may think and talk about the same thing we must choose one name in particular. Black being the most widely used best suits our purpose.

The typical Black Gum is established in the tradition of the southern States. It lives in the lively old tune "Possum Up De Gum Tree" and in the familiar "Bee Gum" hives made from sections cut out of rot-hollowed trunks of old trees. A mature Black Gum is a stately thing, held aloft on a trunk two feet across, to a height of 60 feet or more. Its branches are slender, the lowest tending to droop while those of the middle storey are decidedly horizontal. In this respect, like the Beech, Hawthorn and Flowering Dogwood, it stands out in contrast to most other trees. It has another striking feature also: the wood of its trunk often rots and falls away at the top, with the result that many a Black Gum grows shorter as it grows older.

The leaves of this tree are beautiful at every stage. In bud they are of a warm maroon. A leaf fully opened measures about 2 to 5 inches, has an untoothed margin and a blunt point, is leathery in texture, is dark glossy green above and lighter green below. It seems to belong to some tropical plant. In autumn the tree's cloak of rich solid green changes; as if at random it is generously mottled with splashes of Burgundy red, thus becoming one of the comliest trees of the field.

When the leaves are about one-third grown the flowers emerge. Male and female flowers, each sex usually on its separate tree, appear in long-stemmed clusters but so minute and of so pallid a shade of green that no casual wayfarer would ever notice them. But not so with the fruits that follow in due time -- blue, egg-shaped berries, each barely half an inch long, whose tasty, acid tang tempts men to nibble them and birds to feast on them.

The wood of the Black Gum is of a pale buff shade. Its interwoven fibres make it hard to split and to work. In regions where it is common it is made into ox-yokes, wheel hubs, rollers and fruit crates. Years ago I once saw on an original settler's farm a churn made of this wood. In parts of the northern States it has sometimes been pawned off on the lumber trade as Yellow Poplar, that is, Tulip-tree.

The Tupelo

Black Gum is thinly scattered over the eastern one-third of the United States, occurring as a rule in poorly-drained areas or at the edges of streams from southern Maine to Florida and Texas.

Ontario specimens have been referred to the variety caroliniana with less leathery leaves, and often found on more upland sites. It occurs sparsely over a zone, roughly thirty miles broad, paralleling the Lake Erie shore line from the Niagara to the Detroit. It is generally solitary, but sometimes appears in loose groups, the best example I know being situated near the Thames south of Thamesville in Kent County.

(reprinted from "The Cardinal", newsletter of the McIlwraith Field Naturalists" of London. Number 124. August 1986.)

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MORE HELP WANTED ON BLUEBIRD TRAILS

I have nearly 500 Bluebird nesting boxes erected in Dufferin County, 80 miles north of Brantford. There are areas where bluebirds occupy 5 out of 9 boxes in a 200 acre field. There are areas that run zero out of eleven boxes.

Just as Bill Read requested help, I would like some assistance with my project. I have a vat to soak cedar posts in Creosote and 100 posts ready for this vat. I have 360 sheets of galvanised steel, some rolled, some not, in order to keep out mammals.

I request help with my scheme to help native birds. Some of the work will be heavy and dirty, some will be checking the nesting boxes in hilly country, some banding is possible if you have a federal permit. Typing of the results on special cards for the R.O.M will take about 2 hours each day from April until mid-August for anyone interested.

The Ministry of Natural Resources helps with money to the extent of $300 per year. Long Point Bird Observatory also helps. The Toronto Hiking Club sends me $150 each spring and various business men send in cheques of $100 or so, in order to help those of us in the Hamilton Naturalists' Club help native birds in the face of pressure from Sternus vulgaris and Passer domesticus.

Leo Smith
408 - 65 Simpatica Crescent
Brantford N3P 1M7
(519) 759-4852

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